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Summary:

Will Byers was a weird kid.

Or, at least, that’s what everyone told him. Why? He didn’t know the exact reason, but he suspected it had something to do with the fact that he wasn’t like the others. He was… different. You know when you have to do a school project in a small group and there’s always that one kid who never says anything, but does all the work? Yeah, that was Will. A sweet, quiet boy who had always been kind of an outsider.

A wallflower, as his mom called it.

1. Chapter 1

Will Byers was a weird kid.

Or, at least, that's what everyone told him. Why? He didn't know the exact reason, but he suspected it had something to do with the fact that he wasn't like the others. He was… different. You know when you have to do a school project in a small group and there's always that one kid who never says anything, but does all the work? Yeah, that was Will. A sweet, quiet boy who had always been kind of an outsider.

A wallflower, as his mom called it.

Not that he minded, though. When he was younger he had played in the schoolyard alone, eating his lunch on the swings with only the teacher to keep him company. She was a sweet woman, Will guessed around 30, with light blonde hair and big green eyes. Back then he thought she'd been his friend, but looking back at it now she probably just wanted him to feel less alone. When he went to elementary school he surprisingly enough made a friend. Her name was Nicole and she always seemed to be happy, with sparkling blue eyes and her red hair tied into two ponytails. He liked playing with her, but then her dad got a job in Minnesota and they moved away. From then on, Will had always been alone at school. People often picked at him because he was an easy target, since he had no friends to protect him. He pretended like he didn't care, but deep inside it hurt. It wasn't exactly the best feeling in the world to hear how ugly you are, or how weird, or weak. It wasn't really bullying, it was more…. excluding him. Whispering about him behind his back, not inviting him to parties, that kind of stuff. It had been the same in high school so far, and that's why Will Byers expected everything but to make a friend.

Until Mike Wheeler took place right next to him.

September1987

It's been a month since school had started again. Will still hasn't spoken to anyone and if he's honest to himself, he's perfectly fine with that. Because here's the thing: Will doesn't know how to properly talk to people he doesn't know. How do people just….talk? What do they talk about, the weather? School? He has no idea. Chit chatting has never been his thing, he prefers having a deeper conversation with someone. Why talk about something stupid like the weather when you could have an actual conversation with someone?

All of that goes through his head when Mike Wheeler throws his books on the table next to his and plops down on the chair. "Oh my God, I just can't believe the teacher's this childish. A seating plan? Are you serious?" he sighs. Will doesn't know what to say, so he just raises his shoulders and looks at his hands. The teacher, had come up with the marvelous idea to make a seating plan because otherwise everyone would be talking to each other. His name's Mr. Wilson, he's a small, old man who no one seems to like. This was the first time he was Will's teacher, but Will has seen him in the hallways before. Always being accompanied by a mug with what Will supposes to have coffee in it. He doesn't really get the whole hype with coffee; why would you willingly drink something so bitter and disgusting? He once asked his mom, who isn't able to start the day without her daily cup (or three) of coffee. "It helps me to wake up," she had said while ruffling his hair. "Otherwise I'm not able to function." Will had raised his eyebrows, not being able to function? He could function perfectly without it. He figured it'd be something for adults, something that he couldn't understand yet. But here he is, five years later and still wondering why in the world people like that stuff.

Will suddenly feels eyes lingering on him and he hears Mike saying "I don't believe we've ever talked before, have we?"

Will looks aside, surprised that he even speaks to him. Normally people just ignore him, screaming to the other side of the classroom in an attempt to talk to their friends. The second he locks eyes with Mike, he realizes he made a mistake by looking up. Because boy, his eyes were mesmerizing. Big and soft hazel brown-colored with golden dots in them, like the sun was radiating through them. Mike raised his eyebrows slightly, waiting for an answer, and Will shakes his head slightly like he wakes up from a trance.

“Um, no, I-” he stutters.

Will internally facepalms. Why can’t he just say something normally for once?!

“I don’t think we ever did, indeed”. Will quickly stares at his hands again, unable to look into Mike’s eyes any longer. Fucking hell, why did Mr. Wilson feel the need to put exactly Mike Wheeler next to him? Especially in art class, one of the very few classes Will actually liked.

He may have never talked to Mike before, but Will had certainly noticed him. Will’s seated in the very back of the classroom and Mike had been sitting two rows in front of him, next to some red-haired girl. He doesn’t know her name, he just knows that she’s apparently very funny, because Mike’s always smiling when he’s with her. And Will swears to God, it’s the most beautiful smile he has ever seen; bright as the sun that lights up the sky. Imagine it being a drowsy, rainy day - but then the sun appears, bright and beautiful while shining it’s gorgeous rays up into the sky. That’s exactly what Mike Wheeler’s smile looks like; bright as the sun.

Seeing Mike smile has always made Will feel something; like a small, soft fire lit up in his stomach, sending sparks throughout his whole body, warming his heart.

But he never looks at him longer than about ten seconds, feeling guilty for that fire in his stomach. He knows he isn’t supposed to feel like that. All the kids who ever called him weird were right when it comes to that; he is weird. Because he has heard boys talking about the exact same feeling, but they were talking about girls. Boys who like boys are weird.

Will didn’t think like that at first, but he was being told enough to believe it. Six years old Will had cried for a week when Nicole had laughed in his face when he told her about his crush on a boy from his class. “Will,” she had snorted, “that’s impossible. Boys can’t like boys. They like girls, everyone knows that.” She hadn’t noticed the hurt in Will’s eyes, who was trying to blink his tears away. “Yeah, I guess… It isn’t serious anyway, just forget about it.” he had choked out. So she did, she never mentioned it again.

But as easy it was for Nicole to forget about it, the harder it was for Will. He had never seen the hurt in liking boys as a boy, but maybe Nicole was right. Maybe he was abnormal and disgusting. Since the moment she has laughed at him his head and heart had been fighting a constant battle; his head knew he shouldn't love boys, but his heart knew he could never love girls the same way he loved boys. He still has a hard time dealing with this, so he just tries to ignore it. He feels like that's the best thing to do.

He has to admit, it's kind of hard when one of the most beautiful boys he has ever seen is currently sitting right next to him.

Mike Wheeler is the kind of person who everyone knows is stunning, except himself. The messy curly hair that surrounds his face, high cheekbones, sharp jawline and full pink lips make him look like he was created by God himself.

Will's an observer rather than a talker, and boy did he observe Mike Wheeler.

He has seen how his eyes wrinkle when he smiles, or how a tiny dimple in his left cheek appears when he laughs, or how his freckles become more noticeable during the summertime. He's seen how his hands are always fidgeting, how his feet are tapping on the ground non-stop and how hard it is for him to sit still on his chair. He once even noticed how a tiny piece of his right front tooth is missing. Some people may find that ugly, or an imperfection, but Will finds it cute.

Sometimes it's the little imperfections that make a person as perfect as they are.

So, having that all listed, you can imagine Will's having a really fucking hard time trying to act normal around the person who has been his crush for around two years now.

Every word Will says to Mike is a personal accomplishment. The first time Will says "good morning", he even gives himself an imaginary pat on the back.

Unlike Will, Mike doesn't have a single problem with talking to Will.

In fact, he can't stop talking. He's always babbling about everything; from how bad he was at drawing to how annoying his little sister was (Will decided to be brave and ask what her name was, "Holly" had Mike answered with a scrunched up face like she was something disgusting).

He talked about his favourite songs ("London Calling" by the Clash, Jonathan's favourite band), the weather of that day (Mike loved rain, on which Will had gave him a weird look. "Don't look at me like that," Mike had laughed. "It's cosy. Don't you love it when you're laying in your warm bed and the rain's ticking on your window?" Will had never thought of it that way, but he promised Mike to pay attention to it when it'd would rain at night.)

But the subject Mike had talked that had really intrigued Will was his love for the cosmos. Mike literally knew everything about it and Will loved to listen to him talking about it. He had found out about Mike's love for the galaxy when Mr. Wilson had given up the assignment to draw the Milky Way. Will's version was kinda crappy since he knew nothing about it, but Mike's drawing was so incredibly detailed that Will had gasped when he pulled it out of his backpack.

"Oh my God, you made this? It's beautiful!" he says while taking it out of Mike's hands and holding it like it was something expensive. He is so focussed on studying the drawing from up close that he doesn't even realize this is the first time he had said a proper sentence to Mike.

"Um, yeah, I love watching the stars and reading about the universe." Mike smiles. "Don't you think it's wonderful how there are billions of bright stars up there in the sky that to us seem identical, but are in fact all different?"

Will rips his eyes away from the drawing to look at Mike, who's staring out of the window, up at the sky that's currently plain blue. Mike continues: "I just think it's intriguing how we all think we're so important, but in fact we're nothing." He's looking at Will now, who is staring back and for the first time since they'd started talking, he doesn't look away. He just can't rip his eyes away from Mike's, which were filled with so much happiness and passion Will swore if Mike had said that he had just won the lottery, he would've believed it.

“Come here,” he suddenly says. “I want you to look up at the sky.” Will shifted a bit closer, but there’s still distance between their bodies. Mike rolls his eyes. “Are you kidding me? You can’t see the sky like this, if you look up now you’re watching the ceiling, silly.”

Will smiles nervously while scooching a bit more towards the window, causing him and Mike to be literal inches away from each other. He has to lean forwards to be able to see the sky, so he does. His arm touches Mike’s in the slightest way but it’s enough to send a shiver up his spine and to make it feel like the place where they touched was on fire.

“Up there,” Mike says while pointing up, “in the Milky Way, are between 100 and 400 billion stars. Isn’t that incredible?!”

Will smiles at his enthusiasm. “Yeah, it is. I didn’t even know that.” He doubts a second before asking: “Do you know more facts about the universe?”

And that’s how it started. Mike started telling about everything he knew, from stars to planets and from the Milky Way to all the moons that exist. One day, Mike told him about planetary systems.

“Did you know that there are at least 10 trillion planetary systems in the known universe?”

Will’s eyes become as big as dish plates. “No fucking way.” he laughs.

Mike continued: “That’s a 1 with thirteen 0’s behind it. And earth is only one of them!” Will slaps Mike’s arm (not hard, he could never hurt him even if he tried) but Mike makes a facial expression like he had just been knocked down. “Hey, what was that for? No need to get abusive here!” Will giggles.

“I need you to stop listing all these facts, my brain is gonna explode.” Mike pushes back at Will. He smiled.

“Me, stopping listing facts? Not even in your wildest dreams, Byers.”

That night, Will sits at his small desk. He looks around his room, trying to find inspiration for something to draw. He looks at his old teddy bear sitting on the shelf above his bed. Maybe he could draw

that? No, he's done that so many times already. He sighs and spins around in his chair a few times while absently chewing on the back of his pencil. A knight? Ugh, boring. A landscape maybe? No, he wasn't in the mood to make a big piece like that.

He spins around in his chair once again while sighing deeply and suddenly his eye catches something outside of his window. A big, white, radiating ball of light; it was full moon.. He slowly turns around in his chair, taking his pencil from between his lips and opening his sketchbook.

That night, he drew Mike with the moonlight forming a halo around his hair and millions of stars dancing across his cheeks and in his eyes.

After placing the last few pencil streaks, he looks at it critically and he couldn't help but feel like something was missing. While squinting his eyes in an attempt to think of something to fill up the empty space on the bottom of the page, they suddenly snap open. He grabs his black marker and writes in neat, graceful letters:

"Falling in love with your
mind is like charting
constellations,
Connecting dots
between stars
So worthy of
Observation,
Not for their
aesthetics,
But for all the
complications."

2. Chapter 2

It had been 4 weeks since their first conversation when Mike had asked it.

They had been sitting on their usual spot in the back of the classroom and Will was absently balancing on two chair legs, leaning against the wall. He almost fell off it when he heard Mike's question.

"Hey, Will. So um... would you like to join us for lunch today?"

Will must have been staring at Mike like he was a martian, because Mike laughed: "You look like you've just been asked to lunch with the fucking president. It's just us, nothing to worry about. You know who I eat lunch with, right?"

Of course Will knew that. Their table was at the back of the cafeteria, right next to the door that lead to the small vegetable garden. Will often went there to have lunch (on his own, of course), but to get there he had to walk past Mike's table.

He always tried to avoid looking at him, but it was just like there was always this big spotlight shining on him. Everywhere Mike went, he stood out. It was almost impossible not to look at him.

So yeah, he knew who he ate lunch with, but he couldn't say that. Mike would think he was some weird stalker or something.

"Um, no. I don't know actually." He searched around the classroom with his eyes and saw the red-haired girl sitting three rows in front of them. He gestured in her direction with his head. "I only know you have lunch with her."

Mike smiled. "So you do know! That's Max, by the way. She always talks about how much she likes your clothes, I'm sure she'd love it if you'd join us."

Will felt his heart jump a little when he said that. They talked about him? Out of everything, she liked his clothes? He looked down at his outfit, not being convinced of her actually liking it. He wore a red T-

shirt today, paired with light-washed jeans. His Converse-sneakers were white once, but they had turned into a light shade of grey. He hastily had thrown on his all time favourite denim jacket with rips and badges on them. It looked pretty normal to him, almost boring. He felt his cheeks redden up; in his whole life no one had ever said they liked his outfit.

Well, except for his mom, but he could throw on a literal garbage bag and she'd still say she'd love it.

"-so is that okay for you?"

Will suddenly snapped back to reality, hearing Mike finish a sentence he hadn't heard.

"Sorry, what did you say?"

Mike pretended to be extremely annoyed by him, but by his grin Will could tell he wasn't. "Oh my God Byers, you can't even remember what I said literally 10 seconds ago." Will punched his arm.

"I can! I just… zoned out. I'm not used to getting compliments so I had to process it for a bit." he admitted shyly.

Mike's face seemed to grow gloomy. It was just for a split second, but Will noticed it. It was like he got sad by Will's words. Almost as if… he was sorry for him.

Will frowned and shook his head lightly; he probably had just imagined that.

Mike repeated his sentence: "I said, do you know where our lunch table is?"

Will nodded. Yes, he knew that.

"Great, so be there at noon. Okay? I'll introduce you to my friends. Don't worry, they'll love you."

To say that he was a nervous wreck the following lessons, was an understatement.

I'm having lunch with people. I'm gonna be in the cafeteria sitting on a table with people who want me there. Or not. What if they don't like me? Mike said they'll love me, but how would he know? He can't think for his friends, can he? Jesus Christ Will, calm down. It's just lunch. Breathe in, breathe out. Relax. Oh fuck, that was the school bell. I gotta go to the cafeteria now.

So that's where he is now; standing in front of the door that leads to the cafeteria. He inhales deeply one more time, considering to turn around and run away.

But he knows he won't do that. He can do this. He may be a bit shy, or tinier than other boys from his age, but he's not a coward.

So he grips the straps of his backpack a little tighter, and opens the door.

The strong smell of sweaty teenagers and chemical food blows in his face as soon as he steps inside the cafeteria, and he immediately feels like vomiting. Because let's be real here; this disgusting smell paired with the nerves that are currently racing through his whole entire body isn't exactly the best combination ever.

He tries to breathe through his mouth as much as he can while slowly shuffling towards the table in the very back of the cafetaria, having to stop multiple times to step over trampled food that's been thrown on the ground. He had never been fond of this place, it was too crowded for him. He liked it much better in the vegetable garden, outside in the fresh air. Where he belongs.

After all, a flower needs to be outside.

"Will, Will!" he suddenly hears someone yelling. He doesn't recognize the voice but looks into the direction where it came from. He looks straight into the eyes of the red-haired girl, "*her name's Max*," and she's waving at him, gesturing to hurry. Her smile is so wide and genuine that he dares to give a small smile back before stepping over another disgusting smashed hotdog on the ground and walking straight towards the table.

“Oh my God, he really said that?” Max’s laugh rings in Will’s ears and the sound is so contagious that feels the corner of his own lips automatically lift too.

“Yeah, he did.” he giggles.

“Oh my God Wheeler, I can’t believe you!” Max makes a sound somewhere in between wheezing and snorting. “You can’t just hit the poor kid up with all these weird space-facts of yours on literally the *second* day you’re talking to him!”

Mike lets out an offended gasp while laying his right hand on his chest, pretending to be extremely offended. Will chuckles.

“Weird space-facts?! How dare you. They’re actually very interesting. Did you know for instance that Pluto-”

Lucas groans loudly from the other side of the table, joined by the boy with the mass of brown curls who’s now burying his head in his hands.

Dustin, Will remembers.

“Please, just…. stop talking,” Dustin sighs from behind his hands, causing it to sound muffled. “We know Pluto is no longer classified as a planet.”

“We even know about the fact that the Milky Way is around thirteen point six billion years old,” El says while giving Mike a knowing glance. “You’ve told that around, what, seven times now?”

“You know what,” Lucas says while laying his index finger on his chin, pretending to think hard, “I think he told it eight times already.”

They all laugh while Mike sighs and rolls with his eyes dramatically before looking at Will. “Can you believe I’m friends with such disinterested people? Because I really can’t.”

Will lets out a tiny chuckle and says “Well, that’s not entirely true. *I* am interested in them.”

As soon as the words leave his lips, his feels breath hitching in his throat.

Oh God.

Oh God.

Will mentally kicks himself for being so stupid. Mike said no one of his friends was interested in space-facts on which he answered that he did. That means he basically said that they’re friends now.

He feels an undeniable blush creeping up his cheeks and he stares at his hands in his lap, suddenly being extremely interested in them. He doesn’t have the guts to look up at Mike, but after a good thirty seconds he dares to glance up for a second.

The rest of the group had continued their conversation, but Mike wasn’t participating in it. He’s looking at Will from the other side of the table with those big eyes Will loves so much. His head slightly tilted to the right and a small smile tugged at the corners of his lips. Jesus Christ, those *lips*.

Will tries not to look at them, but he has to admit it’s harder than he wishes it was.

Mike opens them in an attempt to say something, closes them, takes a breath like he’s thinking over what to say and while pulling them into a wide smile he says:

“Well, *my friend*, I’m glad there’s at least one person who appreciates my stupid facts.”

Will was 5 years old when he found out about it.

He had been laying on his bed, his pillow soaking wet because of his tears. He didn't know how long he had been crying, he just knew how hurt he was. That day he had asked the boy he liked to play with him in the sandbox. He had said yes, and Will had thought his smile was genuine.

Emphasis on *thought*.

They had been playing for more than an hour, building the biggest and most beautiful sandcastle Will had ever made in his life. Besides that, it felt so nice to do this with someone else for once instead of just himself. Okay, he had noticed how he did most work and Tommy mostly just watched him, sometimes forming a small tower and then going back to absently staring at what Will was doing. Will didn't mind, though. Just the thought of them doing this together was enough for him.

Once Will had placed the last shell on top of the highest tower, he walked backwards to admire their creation. He felt pride burning in his chest and he looked at Tommy with a huge smile. He had stood up as well and was looking at Will's face.

As soon as Will saw his smirk, the smile that had been on his face dropped faster than the light.

"*No*!" he yelled, but it was too late.

Tommy had stepped into the sandcastle and was now stomping on it with his tiny feet. He was laughing out loud and the sound of the breaking shells matched with the feeling of Will's heart.

Stamped on. Pulverized. Crushed. Broken.

Will tried to wipe his tears away with the tip of his blanket, but they kept streaming over his face.

He was silent for a moment. He swallowed, tried to get himself together and then…

He started bawling out loud.

He had cried like he never cried before. His mom wasn't home, it was just Jonathan and him so he didn't have to worry about waking her up. He cried and cried, and the sound of his sobs and hitched breaths *almost* filtered out the sound that came from the room next to his.

Almost, but not entirely.

As soon as his ears caught the sound, he tried to calm himself down. He was breathing faster and heavier than ever, but he succeeded in muffling the sounds of his own sobs to be able to hear those from the other person.

He pulled the sleeves of the soft pyjamas he was wearing over his hands to wipe the tears away and softly let his feet sink to the ground. He thanked his mom in silence for having carpet placed on the floor, because now no one would be able to hear his footsteps. He walked towards the door on his toes, clutching his teddy bear under his right arm while slowly opening to door with his left hand. He switched the little light on that was hanging above the small corridor and then the sound confirmed what he had been suspecting.

Jonathan was crying.

He walked over to his door and placed his ear onto it to be able to listen more closely. Yes, it was really him. Will had never heard his brother cry before. It sounded weird. Jonathan was supposed to be happy, to laugh and to smile and to yell at Will to stop tickling him. It hurt to hear him like this. Will loved his brother more than anyone else, he was his best friend. Not that Will had any other friends, but if he had he was convinced Jonathan would still be the best one.

He hesitated a second before he heard Jonathan make a loud crying sound again and he couldn't bear hearing him like this anymore. He turned the doorknob around and stumbled in.

Jonathan was sitting on his bed; knees bent, with a pillow clutched in

between his stomach and his thighs. His face was red and streaky from the tears and Will saw how his knuckles turned white from holding the pillow as tight as he could.

The sight almost made Will cry again.

But he stayed strong; for Jonathan, to help him. He softly walked over to the bed and Jonathan didn't notice him until the mattress sank down under Will's weight. He looked up with teary eyes and Will could see the hurt in them. He shifted a bit closer and Jonathan sniffled.

"Hey buddy, what are you doing here?" he asked with a raspy voice. Will fiddled with his hands in his lap, not knowing what to do with them.

"I wanted to know what's wrong," Will whispered. "Maybe I can help cheer you up. Play you some music, like you always do when I'm sad."

Jonathan smiled through his tears and inhaled shakily.

"No, that's okay bud. You don't have to do that. Go back to your room, it's late."

Will looked into Jonathan's eyes. They were green like his own, the only difference was that Jonathan's were a shade darker. He saw how his lip trembled and made a decision.

"No."

He grabbed Jonathan's hand. "Tell me what's wrong, mom always says it's good to talk when you're sad. I'm a good listener."

Jonathan smiled, wiping his tears away with his right hand, clutching Will's in his left.

"I know but… It's kind of weird bud. I don't know exactly what's going on or why I'm crying. It's just…"

He cut himself off in the middle of his sentence and looked at Will with a doubting facial expression. Will raised his eyebrows, as a

gesture for him to continue.

Jonathan sighed.

“I don’t know what happened, but about an hour ago I felt this sudden pain. Almost like... someone was stamping on my heart. I could feel it wasn’t physical, I… I know the feeling way too well to know it was mental pain.”

He looked down at their intertwined hands, squeezing Will’s a little.

“It was the feeling of heartbreak. Like when you love someone so much and you’re willing to give them everything, but then they break your heart. That’s what it felt like. Like your whole world falls apart and all that’s rested is tears, and pain.”

Will’s eyes were widened now, staring at Jonathan intensely. He soaked up his words like a sponge and something inside his brain clicked.

Jonathan continued: “I don’t know where this is coming from. I’m not in a relationship with someone right now, not even in love. But- but it still feels like someone broke my heart.”

Will shut his eyes, trying to think. *What was going on?* His brain felt like it was anesthetized, not being able to function. He slowly pulled his hand out of Jonathan’s grip and slid off the bed, back on the ground. His legs felt like they were made out of spaghetti and he was surprised they could still hold his weight. He slowly backed away from Jonathan, towards the door. His hand was on the doorknob, ready to turn it around when Jonathan asked one last thing.

“Will, do you know a certain Tommy?”

He opened the door, slammed it shut and slid down to it onto the floor.

Oh my God.

Author's Note:

hi beautiful human being who's reading this rn,

thanks for reading the first chapter!
this is my first full fic so please let me know what you think! more chapters will be added soon.

special thanks to erin for checking this before it went online and for being the most wonderful, supporting friend i could ever wish for <3